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SUN-CLEAR STATEMENT

To the Public at large concerning the true nature of the NEWEST PHILOSOPHY. An attempt to force the reader to an understanding.

Translated from the German of J. G. FICHTE, by A. E. KROGER.

THIRD CONVERSATION.

R. I believe that I have now fully grasped your opinion concerning the Science of Knowledge, and that, historically, I know quite well what you mean. Moreover, when I accept the mere similarity of your science with the demonstration of a mechanical work of art, I can think the possibility of it quite well, and in a general way. But as soon as I reflect on the necessary distinction of both, and the characteristic differences of their several objects, a science like the one you describe appears to me to be utterly impossible.

The conception of the systematic connection of the manifold in a work of art with the view to produce a prearranged result has been in the mind of the artist long before the work of art existed; which work has indeed been produced only after this conception and according to it. We others do nothing but reconstruct that conception of the artist, or *reinvent* his work of art. Hence, it is here very significant to say, that there is a systematic connection in the manifold. This systematic connection is in the *conception of the artist*, and of all those who think as artists.

But tell me, does your assertion of a systematic connection in the manifold of consciousness signify likewise, that this con-

sciousness has been prepared by some artist according to the conception of such a connection, and that the teacher of the Science of Knowledge only reinvents this conception? Where is this artist? And how and in what manner has he produced consciousness?

A. Supposing it is not to signify this, and that the comparison is not to be extended so far? Supposing that ambiguous proposition is to signify no more than the following: we *may* view—amongst other manners of viewing—the manifold of consciousness as systematically connected; or: there are two ways of viewing the determinations of consciousness: one immediate way, by immediately surrendering ourselves to them, and thus finding them as they present themselves; and another way, through mediation, or by systematically deducing them as they must necessarily present themselves in consequence of this systematic connection? In which case the latter view could be realized only after actual consciousness had already existence, and on no account in advance of the existence of consciousness. Nor could the latter view exist for any but such as with arbitrary freedom might take hold of it. Hence, the teacher of the Science of Knowledge, and he alone, would be the artist of

consciousness, if there were any artist in this case. He would be, as it were, the *reinventor* of consciousness without there being any first and original inventor and any prior conception of consciousness, according to which he could have produced his invention.

R. If I understand you correctly, I am to seize it in the following manner: there is a consciousness as the fundamental determination of my life, as sure as I am myself. This consciousness appears to be a connecting manifold. What sort of a consciousness it may be, I know only by entertaining it, and on this stand-point I cannot properly ask any further questions. At the same time, however, it is likewise possible that this manifold can be systematically deduced as necessarily precisely as it is, if consciousness is to be at all. This view, this deduction, and the systematic connection which results in the deduction, exist only for him who grasps this view, and, absolutely for no one else; and other questions are not asked at all on this stand-point.

A. You express it correctly.

R. Well, let it be; although here again I rather seize your opinion historically than comprehend it, and although I have still many questions to ask.

But to proceed; the artist, who traces out this conception of a mechanical work of art, reduces, in this conception, the manifold to the unity of a result. The work of art is to serve this or that purpose; and the manifold and the way in which it works together involve, in the conception of the artist, the conditions under which alone the work of art can serve this purpose; and this unity exists in advance of the work of art and even prior to the conception of the manifold. The latter conception arises only through that of the unity, and exists only for its sake, being determined through it. Precisely such a manifold is needed, because precisely such a purpose is to be achieved.

Such a conception of the unity appears, therefore, to me as inseparable from that of a systematic connection. Hence, the teacher of the Science of Knowledge probably possesses the conception of such a

unity, of such a purpose and result of all consciousness, to which he reduces the manifold as conditions of the same.

A. Undoubtedly.

R. This unity he cannot first discover in the system, but must possess it before he commences his systematic deduction, precisely as the artist must first know what purpose his work of art is to serve before he can hunt up the means wherewith to attain it.

A. Unquestionably; the teacher of the Science of Knowledge must possess the conception of the unity in advance of the system.

R. The artist arbitrarily thinks this purpose, and produces it through his thinking, since the existence of the work of art, as well as its form, depends altogether upon the artist. But since the teacher of the Science of Knowledge does on no account produce consciousness, (it existing independently of him and existing thus precisely as it is, even by your own confession,) it is not well possible, that the artist can produce this *unity* through *free thinking*, since the manifold, which exists actually, and without the co-operation of the philosopher, must likewise relate itself to that unity, independently of the philosopher. Neither can he, as has already been said, find that unity in his systematic deduction, for the unity is presupposed as condition of the possibility of the deduction. Nor can he find the unity through perceptions in actual consciousness, for only the manifold, and not the unity, occurs in actual consciousness. How, then, and in what manner is he to arrive at this unity?

A. It suffices, if you assume that he arrived at it through some happy chance. He *guesses* this unity. This, of course, gives him only an assumption, and he must take the risk of building his system upon it entirely on the assumption that he has guessed correctly.

If the investigation shows, finally, that all the manifold of consciousness can really be reduced to that assumption, as to its unity, but only then, has he proved by this very reduction that his presupposition was correct. The presupposition has been proved by the fact, by the establishment of the system.

R. Well, grant even this. But again: The artist knows in advance of his conception the necessary and unchangeable laws of his mechanism, those laws, upon which he calculated in his combination of the manifold for the achievement of a certain result. He knows, likewise, the materials and their qualities, out of which he proposes to form the manifold, and upon the unchangeableness whereof he also bases his calculation in his conception. Now, if the comparison is to hold good, the philosopher must also have, in advance of his deduction, a knowledge of unchangeable laws, according to which the manifold of consciousness produces the presupposed unit-result, and moreover—unless I am very much deceived—also, a knowledge of a material component of consciousness, which is already determined by these laws.

Let me, for the present, assume merely the first. But how does the philosopher obtain the knowledge of these laws? Does he, perchance, hit upon them by a lucky guess, until they prove themselves correct by the fact that the manifold of consciousness can be explained according to them, from the presupposed chief result; similarly as the fact, that precisely this result is the ultimate result of these laws, proves the result to be correct?

A. You make fun of the Science of Knowledge, but with rather more profundity than is usual. No; the Science of Knowledge does not proceed in this manner, for that were to proceed in a most vicious and self-evident circle.

I am very content to keep to the comparison once adopted. Let the teacher of the Science of Knowledge be the artist, who builds up the art-work of consciousness, which however exists already, as he cheerfully admits; which he, therefore, only *re-invents*, and yet invents altogether, since he never looks at the existing art-work during the operation.

But the great distinction is this: the artist who produces a mechanical work operates upon dead matter, which he puts in motion, while the philosopher operates upon a living something, which moves itself. He does not so much generate consciousness as that he rather causes consciousness

to generate itself under his observation. Now, if consciousness operates according to laws, it doubtless will generate itself according to these laws, and the observing philosopher will thus discover these laws at the same time; although his final object was not to obtain a knowledge of these laws, but of their total result, consciousness.

R. What! A consciousness, which generates itself, and which yet is not the actual consciousness of which we all have possession?

A. Of course; for actual consciousness does not systematically generate itself, its manifold being connected by mere chance. That consciousness which generates itself under the observation of the philosopher is merely an image of actual consciousness.

R. An image which generates itself? I utterly cease to understand you, and I am sure I shall not understand you until you have given me a short sketch of your procedure.

A. Very well. The presupposition, from which we start, is this: that the final and highest result of consciousness, or that to which all its manifold is related as the condition to the conditioned, or as the wheels, springs, and chains in the watch are related to the hand, is nothing else than *clear and complete self-consciousness*, as you and I and all of us are conscious of ourselves. I say, you and I and all of us, and thereby exclude, in conformity with a previous remark, all that is purely individual, which cannot enter our system at all according to our presupposition. That, which you ascribe to your self alone, and not to me, or I only to me and not to you, remains excluded; except that you do so ascribe something exclusively to your self and I, to my self and each one to his Self.

Now, this result—that complete self-consciousness is the highest and final result of all consciousness—is, as we have said, a mere presupposition, which awaits its confirmation from the system. From this self-consciousness, in its fundamental determination, the deduction begins.

R. In its fundamental determination? What does that mean?

A. In regard to that, which in it is not at all determined by any other consciousness, and which can, therefore, not be found in the deduction, but from which, on the contrary, the deduction must proceed. The presupposition is, that the manifold of consciousness contains the conditions of complete self-consciousness. Nevertheless, there may be somewhat in this self-consciousness which is not conditioned by anything else. This somewhat is to be established, and from it the deduction proceeds.

R. But how do you find it?

A. Likewise, only by a happy hit, but as somewhat, which when once found, needs and requires no further proof, but is immediately self-evident.

R. Abstaining for the present from all inquiry as to this immediate self-evidence itself, tell me, what is it in this somewhat which is thus immediately self-evident?

A. That it is the absolutely unconditioned and the characteristic of self-consciousness.

R. I shall not be able to understand you, until you tell me what this unconditioned and characteristic of self-consciousness is, which is thus self-evident.

A. It is the *Ego-Hoon*, the subject-objectivity, and nothing else whatsoever, the positing of the subjective and of its objective, of consciousness and of the object of consciousness as one and the same, and as absolutely nothing but this its identity.

R. I know from various sources, that people generally consider you very incomprehensible, and, moreover, very ridiculous in your views on this first point, which you must, nevertheless, hold to be altogether clear and comprehensible, since all your reasoning starts from it. Be good enough, therefore, to furnish me some means by which I can make it clearer to those others, in case they should ask me about it; unless, indeed, such an explanation belongs rather to the Science of Knowledge proper, and not to a mere statement of its nature.

A. It certainly belongs to this statement, for it is the previously mentioned common point of the Science of Knowledge and of actual consciousness, from which the former rises above the latter. Who-

soever is to receive a perfectly clear conception of this science must know the point from which it starts, and this conception is the very thing which our statement proposes to create.

But what people say about not having understood us on that point belongs to the absolutely incomprehensible; for every child, that has but ceased to speak of itself in the third person and calls itself "I," has already realized that point, and can, therefore, understand us.

I shall have to repeat what I have said already several times. Think something: for instance, the book you hold in your hand. You can doubtless become conscious of the book as the object of your thought, and of yourself as the thinking. Do you appear to yourself as being one and the same with the book, or as another?

R. Doubtless, as another, I shall never mistake myself for the book.

A. Is it necessary, in order that you do not mistake yourself—the thinking, for the thought—that the thought should be a book, and this particular book?

R. By no means. I distinguish my self from *every* object.

A. Hence, in the thinking of this book you can abstract from all that which makes the present object of your thinking a book, and this particular book; and you can reflect solely upon the fact, that in this thinking you distinguish yourself—the thinking—from the thought.

R. Undoubtedly; and in replying to your question, whether I distinguish my self from the book, I reflected only on that fact.

A. Hence, you distinguish every object from yourself as the thinking, and no object exists for you except through and by means of this distinction.

R. Precisely.

A. Now, think your self. You doubtless can become conscious in this case, also, of a thinking and a thought. Do both continue separate in this thinking of your self, and form a duality?

R. No; for in thinking *myself*, I am the thinking, for otherwise I should not think; and at that same time, I am the thought, for, otherwise, I should not think myself,

but some other object, as for instance, this book.

A. Well, you have now certainly thought yourself, i. e., you, this particular individual, Caius, Sempronius, or whatever may be your name. But you, doubtless, can abstract also from these particular determinations of your personality, precisely as you were able to abstract from the particular determinations of this book; and can reflect only upon the uniting of the thinking and the *thought*, as, in the other case, you reflected upon the *dirempting* of both. Nay, you actually did so when you told me that in the thinking of your self, the thinking and the thought unite for you. It is, therefore, in this uniting of the thinking and the thought, which in the thinking of an object always dirempts, that you discover the Ego, and hence, the essential characteristic of the Ego,—of that much abused, *pure* Ego, concerning which our modern philosophers have for years puzzled their brains, and do still assert that it is a psychological—write *psychological*—deception, and an infinitely laughable affair altogether.

R. Perhaps they thought that such a pure Ego, such a reuniting, and, in itself returning thing was concealed somewhere in their souls, like a blade in a knife, and kept looking for it, but could not find the blade; whereupon they concluded that those who pretended to have seen it had deceived themselves.

A. Very probably. But how did you discover this uniting?

R. In thinking myself.

A. Do other people also think themselves?

R. Doubtless, unless they speak without thinking, for they all speak of themselves.

A. In thus thinking themselves, do they proceed in the same manner in which you proceed?

R. I believe so.

A. Can they observe this their procedure, just as you have observed yours?

R. I do not doubt it.

A. Hence, if they do it in thus thinking themselves, they will doubtless also find that uniting of the thinking and the

thought; but unless they do it, they will not find it. Such is our statement. We do not speak of the finding of something which lies ready made before them; but of the finding of a somewhat which is first to be produced by free thinking. The Science of Knowledge is not psychology; and psychology itself is nothing. But at present I wish you to give me a decided answer as to whether you seriously hold, that I and all other rational beings, in thinking our Self, do proceed precisely as you do, i. e. that in this thinking of our Self we hold the thinking and the thought to be one?

R. I not only assume this, but I assert it to be absolutely certain, and I hold an exception to be utterly impossible. The thought of an I (Ego) does not occur except through such proceeding, and this proceeding is itself the thought I. Hence everyone who thinks himself must proceed in that same manner.

A. But I beseech you, dear reader, do you then think into my soul and into the soul of all rational beings; or, assuming that you can do so, have you then actually surveyed and thought into the soul of all rational beings, and been thus authorized to assert something of their souls?

R. By no means; and yet I cannot withdraw what I have asserted. Nay, in becoming thoroughly conscious of my self I find that I can assert still more; that I can assert further, that each of all other rational beings must assert the same out of his own consciousness in relation to all the others.

A. How do you get at these assertions?

R. If I become very conscious of my self, I discover that my procedure in thus thinking my self is immediately accompanied by the irresistible and inflexible conviction, that neither I nor any other rational being can ever proceed otherwise.

A. Hence, through this procedure you prescribe a law for yourself, and for all rational beings; and thus you have at the same time an illustration of the immediate evidence which I mentioned before. But now let us get back to our argument. This fundamental and characteristic determination of self-consciousness, the philosopher

discovers outside and independent of his science. It cannot be proved in the science itself, nor, indeed, can it be proved as a proposition in any manner. It is immediately self-evident. Nor can it be proved as fundamental proposition of the Science of Knowledge in any other way than by the fact itself, i. e. by showing that the required deduction is actually possible from it. The manner of proceeding in this deduction is as follows: In the thinking of my self, says the teacher of the Science of Knowledge, I proceed as has just now been stated. Now let us see whether another procedure may not connect with that first one, thus giving us a new fundamental characteristic of consciousness, and a third procedure, perhaps, with that second, &c., &c., and let us continue this until we have arrived at the completely determined self-consciousness, and have thus obtained a systematic deduction of the whole?

R. I again do not understand you. You ask me whether another procedure—doubtless another determination of consciousness—may not connect with the first one? But how can it connect, and with what? I, at least, in that thinking of my self am conscious of nothing else but the identity of the thinking and the thought.

A. Nevertheless you abstracted, at my request, and according to your own observation, from many other things, which you thought at the same time you were thinking your self. This was very proper; and to take this Other up again in the same confusion in which it occurred in your consciousness, would not advance the Science of Knowledge. However that may be; even in that very observation in which you seized the thinking of your self, there occurs something else, and you will find it as soon as you look a little closer at it. For instance: does not this thinking of your self appear to you as a transition from another condition to this particular condition?

R. It really does so appear to me.

A. Do you believe that it must appear so to every other person who looks at it closely?

R. I certainly do believe it when I make

myself clearly conscious of it; and I even assert that it must so appear to *all* others. There is the same immediate evidence here which we discovered before.

A. In precisely the same manner does this second appearance, if you but examine it closely, connect with another one, and that one, under the same condition, with a third one, and in this manner the Science of Knowledge advances step by step, until all the manifold of consciousness has been exhausted, and terminated in the completely deduced determined self-consciousness.

Hence, in a certain respect, it is the teacher of the Science of Knowledge himself who generates his system of consciousness, which system, nevertheless, in another respect, generates itself. The teacher merely furnishes the occasion and condition of that self-generation. But while he is thinking and construing what he intended to think and construe, something else, which he did not intend to produce, joins it with absolute necessity, and accompanied by the evident conviction, that it must appear in the same manner to all rational beings.

It is only the origin and first starting point of his system which the teacher of the Science of Knowledge generates with absolute freedom. From this starting point he is *led*, but not *driven*, onward. Each new link, which arises in his construction of the previous link, he must again construe with full freedom, whereupon a new link will again arise to connect with it, and with this new link he proceeds in the same manner. Thus his system is gradually built up. Here, therefore, in this connecting of one manifold with another, those laws of consciousness which you were inquiring about, manifest themselves. His final object is the apprehending, not of these manifolds, but merely of their result.

R. I remember having heard that people say: Your system is correct and logical enough if your fundamental principle is once admitted. How is this?

A. Unless the significance of the whole system, as well as of its fundamental principle, is utterly misapprehended and taken in a sense in which it is incorrect, and can there-

fore never be proved; in other words, unless that system and its fundamental principle are viewed psychologically, the demand for the proof of the fundamental principle can mean only the following:

Firstly, opponents may demand a proof of our right not to philosophize in the manner in which they do, and to philosophize in the manner in which we philosophize. This demand is very properly rejected, from the natural reason, that every one has the undisputed right to carry on whatever science he chooses. Let them consider, if they so please, our Science of Knowledge as some new, particular, to them unknown, science, just as we are very willing to consider their philosophies to be whatsoever they assert them to be. It is only when we say that their philosophies are nothing at all, as we really hold, and shall tell them at the proper place, that they may properly require proof from us. But this proof is completely and decisively established only in our whole Science of Knowledge, and hence they will have to study that science after all.

Secondly, they may demand that the fundamental principle of that Science shall be proved as such fundamental principle of the system in advance of the system itself, which demand is absurd.

Finally, they may require us to demonstrate the truth of the content of that proposition through an analysis of the conceptions which it involves. But this would show that they have no conception of, or capacity for, the Science of Knowledge, which is never based upon conceptions, but always upon the contemplation of immediate evidence. Hence, in this case, we could only turn our back on them, unwilling to waste time upon them any further.

R. But I fear very much that the latter is the very point which is obnoxious to them. If every one can appeal to his contemplations and require others to entertain them, without properly establishing his proof by conceptions, why he may assert whatever he chooses. Every stupidity will remain unpunished, and a door will be opened to all sorts of imaginary theories. This is what they will say, I fear.

A. Nobody can prevent them from say-

ing it; let all, moreover, who are like them believe them. But you, my readers, who are unprejudiced, and to whom—although you are resolved not to enter upon the study of philosophy itself, and not to elevate yourself to the contemplation peculiar to this science—I am to furnish a conception of philosophy: to you I can describe the nature and possibility of contemplation from other easier examples.

You assume, I suppose, that a rectilinear triangle is completely determined by two sides and the included angle, or by one side and the two adjoining angles; i. e. that if these are given, precisely such lines must be added as will constitute a triangle?

R. I do assume it.

A. Do you not fear that a case may occur when such will not be the case?

R. I have no such fear.

A. Do you not fear, then, that some other rational being, understanding your words, may, nevertheless, deny this assertion?

R. I do not fear that either.

A. Have you then tested that proposition in all possible cases of triangles, or have you asked all possible rational beings whether they assent to it?

R. How could I?

A. Then tell me: how do you get at that conviction which you assume to be valid for you in all possible cases without any exception, and, moreover, for all possible rational beings without any exception?

R. I will take the first instance, wherein we presupposed two sides and the included angle. If I am clearly conscious of myself, I get at it in this manner: I draw in my imagination some particular angle with two sides, and close the opening between the lines by a straight line. I discover that absolutely only one straight line can close this opening; that this line rests on either side in a certain inclination towards the two given sides, thus forming two angles; and that it can touch them absolutely in no other inclination.

A. But your arbitrarily drawn angle was surely a determined angle, of so and so many degrees. Or did you draw a general angle?

R. How could I? I can only describe determined angles, though I may neither know nor intend their size. The mere description makes the angle determined for me.

A. In like manner the presupposed sides were determined, were of a certain length. Hence, granting you a number of other objections, you might certainly say in this particular case: "under the presupposition of *this* determined angle and of *these* determined sides, the triangle can be closed only by the one straight line which I draw, and only by the one possible pair of angles which arise in my construction." For you must confess that no more than this is contained in your internal *perception*, which evidently proceeds from determined presuppositions. You may certainly try the same experiment with other triangles, and may be able to make the same assertions concerning them wherever actual perception shall warrant you in doing so; but you never can cover with your present assertion all these cases which you have not yet tested; least of all can you extend it so boldly and recklessly to the infinity of cases which you cannot possibly exhaust by actual experiment.

Had you not better, therefore, correct your expression, and restrict your assertion to those cases which you have experienced upon?

R. If I observe myself correctly, and look clearly into my consciousness, I shall not do so on any account. I cannot consent to limit the universal validity of my assertion.

A. Perhaps you take the many cases in which you have found your assertion to be correct, and extend them to universality, judging by analogy, habit, association of ideas, or whatever you choose to call it, that it will always prove valid?

R. I do not believe it. A single experiment is sufficient, and is as efficient as a thousand to impel my universal assertion.

A. Seriously, I also do not believe it; and that talking of arbitrarily raising the occurrence of a great number of cases to universality appears to me to be the utterance of absolute unreason.

But now, dear reader, permit me to be

somewhat intrusive, for I shall not allow you to escape until you have given me a clear account of the manner in which your procedure in the construction of a triangle can account for the universal validity of your assertion, which you are not willing to abandon.

R. I evidently abstract in the universality of my assertion from the determinateness of the angle and of the two sides which I presupposed and closed by the third side. That I did so abstract is simply factual, and appears from the mere analysis of my assertion.

Hence, I also must have abstracted in my construction of the triangle, and in my observation of that construction, upon which observation my assertion based itself, from that its determinateness; only I did not become very clearly conscious of having done so, for, if I had become so conscious, the conclusion would surely have indicated what was contained in the premise. But when I abstract from all determinateness of the angles and of their sides, no angles and sides of any kind remain as given objects, and hence nothing remains as object of my observation, or—if you denominate the observation of a given and actual exclusively *perception*, as I believe you do—no perception of any kind remains. But since there must remain an observation, and something for that observation, as otherwise I could not make any assertion at all, this remainder can be nothing else than my mere *drawing* of lines and angles. Hence it must be this which I really observed; and this presupposition agrees very well with what I am actually and clearly conscious of in that proceeding.

When I began to describe my angle I did not at all intend to describe an angle of so and so many degrees, but merely to describe an angle in general, and sides in general. It was not through my intention that the angle and the sides became determined, but through necessity. When I came to the actual description, they certainly became determined in precisely that manner; but God only knows why they happened to become determined precisely as they did.

Now, this consciousness of my drawing

of lines, which lies beyond all perception, is doubtless what you call *contemplation*.

A. Precisely.

R. Then, in order to discover the ground of my universal assertion, it is necessary that this contemplation of my construction of a triangle should be immediately connected with the absolute conviction, that I can never construe a triangle differently. If this were so, then I should in that contemplation take hold of and embrace, at the same time, and with one glance, *my whole faculty of construction*, and this by means of an immediate consciousness, not of this determined constructing, but absolutely of all my constructing in general, as such. Hence the proposition: these "three parts of the triangle determine its other three parts," would signify simply, my constructing of the former three parts determines my construction of the other three parts; and hence the universality, which I posited, would not arise from a gathering up of the manifold into a unity but rather from the deduction of the infinite manifold out of the unity, which I seize at one glance.

A. But you assert this proposition in its universality to be, moreover, universal for all rational beings?

R. Certainly; and I can just as little abandon this claim to universal validity for all, as I could abandon the universal validity of all. In order to ground it, I must assume that in this immediate contemplation of my procedure, I contemplated this my procedure not only as that of this particular person (myself) but as the procedure of a rational being in general, with the immediate conviction of its absolute certainty. That contemplation would thus be the immediate self-comprehension on the part of reason of its manner of acting, comprehended thus at one glance; and again this universal validity for all persons would not be the result of a gathering up the many into a unity, but rather of the deduction of the infinitely many persons from the unity of one and the same reason. It is to be comprehended how this contemplation, and it alone, grounds immediate evidence, necessity and

universal validity of all and for all, and hence grounds all science.

A. You have excellently comprehended yourself, and I only wish that you could make all those readers, of whom you are the representative, comprehend the matter with equal clearness.

You can now judge for yourself what significance belongs to the objection, that we base our science upon contemplation, and how far those who do raise such an objection can have any claim to scientific culture.

Now, if I tell you that the Science of Knowledge is based upon that very contemplation, which you have just proved and described as the condition of geometry, but based upon it in its highest abstraction, and that the Science of Knowledge has for its object to establish the whole series of this contemplation; nay, that in its highest abstraction it even proceeds from this contemplation; if I tell you that this contemplation for itself,—and hence, universal reason itself, grasping itself in its only central point, and forever determining itself therein,—is the very first link in the chain of the Science of Knowledge, and is that very reason which grasps and comprehends itself therein as reason, and hence is that very pure Ego, described previously, but in the highest significance of the word Ego: then, you will find it very natural, if you have any knowledge of the literature of our age, why our learned men of the latter half of the eighteenth century found it impossible to discover that pure Ego in themselves. It will also be immediately clear to you, what sort of people those persons must be, who want to go even beyond the fundamental principle of the Science of Knowledge, i. e. beyond the absolute self-contemplation of reason, and who really believe that it is possible to go beyond it.

R. The Science of Knowledge, therefore, starts from that pure Ego, or from contemplation in its highest purity, and with every further step of that science a new link connects with the previous links, the necessary connecting whereof is proved in that very contemplation.

A. Precisely in the same manner in which geometry proceeds, where each new proposition adds something new to the proposition previously established, the necessity of which something new, is proved also, only in contemplation. In fact, such must be the method of every real progressive science which does not turn around in a circle.

R. I have been told that you develop your whole science out of the presupposed conception of the Ego, as out of an onion; that all you do is to analyze that conception, and to show that all other conceptions which you establish are contained in it beforehand, however dimly, and that such a conception is called fundamental conception, and the proposition, which announces it, fundamental proposition.

A. I suppose you were very good natured to allow people to tell you such nonsense.

R. I believe I see clearly now, how you proceed to establish your science; and I also see upon what you ground your claim to the universal validity of your science, namely, upon contemplation, which, being the contemplation of the manner of acting of all reason, is therefore valid for all reason, i. e. for all, who, like you, will cause reason to generate that science in them. In short, the product of your science is to be attained, from your assumed presupposition, only in the manner in which you attain it, precisely as the triangle, when those three parts thereof had been presupposed, could also be closed by only one straight line and two determined angles. If you really can prove in contemplation, what you assert you can prove, I have no further objection to your statement; provided, you will content yourself with stating the product of your science to be merely a product of your imagination, and nothing else, just as the oft-mentioned triangle is also nothing but such a product. But it appears to me from what you have said before, that you do not content yourself with this. You are not satisfied to establish your product, as in itself existing and agreeing with itself; you go beyond it. You assert it to be, moreover, a picture

of true actual consciousness, as it exists without the co-operation of philosophy, or of that consciousness which we all possess. This consciousness, you now assert, has the same manifold which the result of your system contains and in the same relation. But I confess that I do not well understand what you do assert on this subject, nor how you will ground such further claims.

A. Nevertheless, you admit that geometry has an application to actual consciousness in life, and consider it, like the Science of Knowledge, to be a picture of a part of your consciousness. Explain and give me your reasons for this claim. Perhaps it will also explain our claim.

In scientific geometry, you draw the line, wherewith you close your arbitrarily imagined angle with its two sides. Now, you find in your field a triangle with an angle determined in itself and two sides determined in themselves. You measure them. Do you need to measure the third one likewise?

R. On no account; for by making use of the unchangeable relation of this third side to the other two, which relation is well known to me, I can discover its actual length through mere calculation.

A. Its actual length! What do you mean by that?

R. If I took my measure and measured it as I have measured the other two sides, I should find its length to be precisely what my calculation states it to be.

A. You are firmly convinced of this?

R. That I am.

A. And you are ready to apply the same procedure to all possible triangles, which you may find in the field, without fear of meeting with some triangle which will form an exception to the rule?

R. I have no such fear, and it is impossible that I should have it.

A. What, then, may be the ground of this, your firm conviction, of the correctness of your calculation in ascertaining the length of the third side independently and in advance of its actual measurement?

R. If I observe myself closely, I must proceed about in this manner:

If two lines and their included angle are presupposed, this angle can be closed by only one possible determined side, i. e. a side which has a determined relation to the other two sides. This is valid for the imaginary construction of the triangle, and becomes immediately clear and certain through contemplation.

Now, I treat the actual triangle according to the laws of the merely imagined one, and with the same certainty, *precisely as if it were likewise involved in that contemplation*. Hence, I *factually* presuppose, that the right to make this application is, indeed, contained in that contemplation. I consider the actual line as one, which has, as it were—I say as it were—arisen through my free construction. How the actual line may have originated, I do not ask at all, for at least its measuring is a reconstructing of the existing line, and hence, I am compelled to assume, that it is altogether the same as if it were an original constructing of it through my free imagination.

A. You have described very accurately the nature of the claims of the Science of Knowledge to validity in actual consciousness. Precisely, as in the original construction of the triangle, the third side was found to be determined by the other two and their angle, so, according to the Science of Knowledge, is the original construction of consciousness a certain somewhat, determined through another. But these determinations are pure creations of imagination, and, by no means, actual determinations of consciousness; just as the lines of the triangle are also purely imaginary.

But now, an actual determination of consciousness enters, precisely as you found an angle and two sides in the field, and you may be just as firmly convinced, that this actual determination contains all the others, which in the Science you have discovered to be inseparable from it, as you were convinced in the case of the actual triangle. The determinations of actual consciousness, to which you are compelled to apply the laws of that consciousness, which you constructed with freedom, ap-

pear to you now also, *as it were*, like results of an original construction, and are judged by you as such. Whether such an original construction of consciousness did really precede consciousness, is not asked at all; indeed, such a question is senseless.

At least, the *judging* is a reconstructing, precisely as measuring is a reconstructing for the geometrician. This judging must agree with an original constructing, which is to be presupposed, as it were, of the object of the judgment, and will assuredly agree with it, if the judgment is correct, just as the measuring of the line must agree with the calculation, if made correctly. This, and nothing more than this, is what the claim of the Science of Knowledge to a validity outside of itself and for actual consciousness in life, is to signify, and in this manner, the claim to such validity is based, like the whole science, upon the same immediate contemplation.

Thus, I believe, that I have given you a sufficiently clear conception not only of the object of the Science of Knowledge in general, but also of its procedure and the grounds of this procedure. This science constructs the entire common consciousness of all rational beings absolutely *a priori*, in its fundamental characteristics, precisely as geometry constructs absolutely *a priori* the universal modes of limiting space on the part of all rational beings.

That science begins with the simplest and most characteristic determination of self-consciousness, namely, its self-contemplation or Ego-hood, and proceeds, on the presupposition that the completely determined self-consciousness will be the final result of all other determinations of consciousness, until this result has been reached; each link of its chain connecting with a new link, and accompanied by the immediate contemplation, that this new link must connect with the previous one in the same manner in the cases of all rational beings whatsoever.

If you posit Ego=A, you will find in the constructing of this A, that inseparable therefrom, a B connects with it, and in the contemplation of the constructing of this

B, you will likewise find that a C connects with it, and so on, until you have arrived at the last link of A, namely, at completely determined self-consciousness.

FOURTH CONVERSATION.

A. It is held that a certain system of consciousness exists for each rational being as soon as this being itself exists. Can that, which this consciousness contains, be presupposed in every human being?

R. Undoubtedly; your very description of that consciousness involves that it is common to all men.

A. Is it also to be presupposed that every person is able to form a correct judgment of objects by means of that consciousness, and to draw conclusions from the one as to the other without falling into error?

R. Clearly enough, provided he has but practised to some extent the faculty of judging which belongs to that system, and which is inborn in all men. Nay, it is no more than fair to assume, until the contrary is proved, that each one has thus moderately developed that faculty.

A. But that which is not included in this universal system, common to all men, and given to them as their heritage, as it were; that which must first be produced by an arbitrary and free abstraction and reflection: is that also to be presupposed in every rational being?

R. Clearly not. Each one attains it only by freely realizing within himself that abstraction and reflection; and otherwise he does not attain it.

A. If, therefore, some person should venture to give his judgment upon the sufficiently described Ego, from which the Science of Knowledge takes its start, and should look for this Ego as a Given in common consciousness, could his judgment be received in the matter?

R. Decidedly not; for that of which you speak is not found in common consciousness, but first must be produced by free abstraction.

A. Again: the teacher of the Science

of Knowledge, whose manner of proceeding we have become acquainted with, describes from this first link a continuous series of determinations of consciousness, wherein each preceding link connects with another, &c., &c. It is these links of his series, whereof he speaks and asserts. Now tell me, how can any one get from the first link to the second, from the second to the third, &c.?

R. According to your description only by actually constructing the first link internally within himself, and observing himself in this constructing to see whether or not a second link arises and what that second link may be; and then again constructing the second and observing whether a third link appears, &c. It is only in this contemplation of his constructing, that he receives the object, which is spoken of; and unless he so constructs, the object, which is spoken of, does not exist for him at all. So at least the matter would be according to your description, and this was undoubtedly the answer you intended me to give you.

But the following doubt occurs to me. This series, which the teacher describes, consists only of separate, particular determinations of consciousness. But the actual common consciousness, which belongs to each one without any Science of Knowledge, also contains a separate manifold. Hence if the former are *the same* as the latter and are separated and divided in the same manner, then the manifold of the Science of Knowledge is known from actual consciousness, and we do not need contemplation in order to get at it.

A. It suffices here, to tell you concisely and historically, that the separates of the Science of Knowledge and of actual consciousness are not at all the same, but utterly different. True, the separates of consciousness also occur in the Science of Knowledge, but only as its final deductions. But in the way of their deduction through our philosophical construction and contemplation there lie elements altogether different, and through the uniting whereof alone there first arises a separate totality of actual consciousness at all.

Let me give you an illustration. The Ego(I) of actual consciousness is certainly, also, a particular and separate Ego; it is a person amongst many persons, all of whom, each for himself, call themselves I, and our Science of Knowledge proceeds with its deduction to the consciousness of this very personality. But the Ego, from which the Science of Knowledge starts, is something quite different, is nothing but the identity of the subject and object of consciousness; and this abstraction can be reached only by removing whatsoever else the conception of personality involves. Those who assure us, that they cannot abstract from their individuality in the conception of the Ego are quite correct if they speak of their Ego as they find it in common consciousness; for in ordinary consciousness, in perception, the identity, which they do not cast their eye upon, and the individuality, which they exclusively attend to, are inseparably united. But if they have not even the general faculty to abstract from actual consciousness and its facts, then the Science of Knowledge has no claims upon them. In previous philosophical systems, all of which had a description of the same series of determinations of consciousness dimly in view, which the Science of Knowledge undertakes, and some of which systems did even hit them in part happily enough,—we meet some of these separates and names for them, as for instance: Substance, accident, &c., &c. But, firstly, these words are not understood by any one, unless he has the contemplation of what they signify; for otherwise he gets merely empty words instead of what they stand for,—as indeed some senseless philosophers have actually considered these words to be things existing for themselves;—and secondly, the Science of Knowledge in rising to a higher abstraction than all those systems did, composes these separates from far simpler elements, and hence in a quite different manner; but finally those artificial conceptions which occur in previous systems are even partly incorrect.

Hence whatsoever the Science of Knowledge speaks of, exists absolutely in contemplation and for that science only, i. e.
6 *

only for him who actually constructs that series; and without this condition it does not exist at all, as indeed without this constructing all the propositions of the Science of Knowledge are utterly without sense or significance.

R. Is this your serious opinion, and shall I take it strictly, without deducting for any exaggeration?

A. Certainly; I desire you to take it in full seriousness. I wish people would believe me, at least on this point.

R. But in that case only one of two things is possible in regard to the Science of Knowledge; it must be understood, or altogether not understood; must be correctly apprehended, or not at all apprehended. But by far the fewest are willing to confess that they do not understand you at all; they believe, that they understand you well enough, but see clearly, that you are in the wrong; whereupon you say, that they misunderstand you. Hence they certainly must make some sort of sense out of your words and expressions, and only not the sense which you intended. But how is this possible according to what you have just now said?

A. Because the Science of Knowledge had to begin with a collection of existing words in a language. If it had been possible for that science to begin, as no doubt it will end, * by creating an altogether peculiar system of signs, *representative only of its contemplations and the relations of those contemplations to each other*, and signifying absolutely nothing but this, then it certainly could not have been misunderstood, but neither would it have been understood and passed from out of the mind of its originator into the minds of others. At present, however, it has to solve the difficult problem of leading others to contemplation by the use of confused words, which thoughts people have even recently attempted to elevate as judges over reason. Every one has hitherto thought something when hearing or reading a word, and now when he hears it again

* Such was also the assertion of Leibnitz, who indeed had begun to create a system of philosophical signs.—*Translator.*

he quickly tries to recall what he did think when he heard this word before. Well, this is very proper. But unless he can rise above the words, which are merely as so many lines in geometry, and above their whole previous significance, to the subject-matter itself, or the contemplation, he will necessarily misunderstand even where he understands best; for that which is the all-important here, *has hitherto neither been said, nor has it been characterized through words, nor can it be said; it can be only contemplated.* The highest where-of word-explanation is capable, is a determined conception; and for that very reason the utterly false in the Science of Knowledge.

This science describes a continuous series of contemplation. Each successive link connects with and is determined through the preceding link; i. e. this very connection explains it and belongs to its characteristic; and only when contemplated in this connection is it contemplated correctly. The third link again is determined through the second, and since the second is determined through the first, the third is likewise immediately determined through the first, and so on until the end. All the previous explains the succeeding, and again all the succeeding further determines that which preceded. In an organic system, the links whereof connect not merely through sequence but through reciprocal determination, it cannot well be otherwise.

Now, I ask you, can any link of the Science of Knowledge be correctly comprehended, unless all the previous links have been correctly comprehended and are present in the comprehension of it?

R. No.

A. Can any part of it be completely and thoroughly understood, unless the whole system has first been completely understood?

R. Not according to what you have said. Each point of the system can be understood only in its connection, and since each is connected with the whole, it can be completely understood only when the whole has been understood.

A. Of course, I mean each point in the

actual science. For, the mere conception of that science, its nature, object and manner of proceeding, may be made known to others, although they are not in possession of the science itself, simply because the conception of that science is taken and deduced from the sphere of common consciousness. To learn to know this conception and to form a judgment of it, I have invited you, as a popular reader; whereas I should take good care not to invite you to a discussion of the system itself.

In the same manner, the final result of the system falls also within the sphere of common consciousness, and in regard to its deduction, likewise, each person can judge, not whether it has been correctly deduced, for about that he has no judgment, but whether it does occur in common consciousness.

Hence, the propositions and component parts of the Science of Knowledge do not lie within the sphere of common consciousness and within the judgment of ordinary common sense. They are produced only through freedom and abstraction, and are determined through their connection, and no one who has not undertaken this abstraction and construction, and who has not followed it to its final result, and cannot keep the whole constantly and firmly in mind, has the least judgment in matters of this description.

R. I clearly see that it is so. Each one who wants to have a judgment on this subject, must first invent for himself the whole system.

A. Assuredly. But since it appears that mankind has philosophized for thousands of years, and has, at various times, as can be clearly proved, been but one hair's breadth removed from the real point at issue, without hitting it, and thereby discovering the Science of Knowledge, and since it may thus be assumed, that the Science of Knowledge, if it should get lost now, would not be found very soon again, it may be advisable enough to make use of its present accidental discovery, by accepting for the present a description of its invention, and using this as an aid in re-inventing it, precisely as is done in the sci-

ence of Geometry, which it also, in all probability, took time enough to discover. People would thus study the Science of Knowledge, and study it until they had made it their own invention.

It is clear, therefore, is it not, that no one who does not prove by the fact, that he has himself invented the Science of Knowledge, or who is not conscious of having studied it long enough to have made it his own discovery, or—for this is the only possible alternative—who cannot establish by proof another system of intellectual contemplation, opposed to that of the Science of Knowledge—can have any judgment upon any proposition of this science, and if it should turn out to be the only possible philosophy, as it asserts itself to be, upon any philosophical proposition whatsoever?

R. Turn whichever way I please, I cannot deny that it is so. But, on the other hand, I cannot condemn the other philosophers for making a very unfriendly face at your proposition, to take them all again to school. They are all conscious of having studied their science as well as you have studied it; some of them, moreover, having passed for masters in it at a time when you were still studying its first rudiments. They presuppose and you yourself confess that you were first shaken out of the dreams of your mind partly by their writings, and at present, when the beards of some of them have grown gray, you tell them either to go to school under you, or to stop talking.

A. True, if they love anything in the world more than truth and science, their fate is a hard one. But there is no help for it. Being very conscious, as they are, that they have never even believed that they possess what we claim to, namely, an evident science, they cannot well help, however distasteful it may be to them, to examine once what there really is in our unheard of pretension. Do you know any other alternative for them, unless they choose to study the Science of Knowledge, than to keep silent, without waiting to be told so, and to take their exit from the scene?

R. Ah, but in that case—and I have al-

ready heard such a birdlet sing,—they will say that you are so extremely conceited as to ask others to despise themselves in comparison with you.

A. This is an invidious manner of getting out of it; but it does not better their case. I do not ask them to think little of the general talent and the knowledge which they have hitherto claimed actually to possess; on the contrary, I compliment the former, by inviting them to an explanation and examination of my science. That it is I who made the discovery, and not they, I ascribe to a happy chance and to the time in which I was born, but I do not in any manner consider it to be a personal merit of my own. But neither is the request that they should consider me and not themselves in possession of this invention, which they have never claimed to possess, and that they ought to listen to what I say about it, any more a presumption that they ought to hold themselves in contempt, than that I would think of despising myself, when I read their books on the presupposition that they may, after all, have thought something which I have not thought.

Each one who goes to be taught some science, presupposes that the teacher knows more about it than he does, for, otherwise, he would not go to be taught, and the teacher presupposes the same, or he would not assume to teach. But the former does not, on that account, hold himself in contempt, for he hopes to be able to comprehend the science quite as well as his teacher, and thus to comprehend it, is indeed his object.

R. But it cannot be known beforehand whether there really is something in your science or not, and whether it is really worth the difficult and persistent study which you require of them. They have been so often deceived by the promises of great wisdom!

A. Of course they cannot know it beforehand, for to ask them to believe our assurance would be ridiculous. But neither did they know this in the case of any other science, which they nevertheless learned at the risk of losing their time. Or did they do so only while they were under the rod of their teacher, and have

they not done it again since they became their own masters?

They must risk our science as they risked the other sciences. Or, if they have been frightened away for their whole lifetime from every venture, the escape is still open to them to keep silent and enter some other profession, to which the presumption of the teachers of the Science of Knowledge may not extend so very soon.

R. If there were only a prospect for them that you and your science would become the fashion. But this you have yourself obstinately prevented in defiance of all the warnings of those who were well disposed towards you. You have inspired your colleagues with too little confidence and love towards your person, for them to be inclined to make you fashionable. You are not old enough. You have neglected the old praiseworthy customs of your profession; you have not allowed yourself to be first introduced in a preface by one of your teachers as a diligent student; nor have you sought to make conversions, and to gain praise and approval in an honest and decent way by letters, by asking for advice and information, by quoting and praising others, and by joining some society of reviewers; thus rising gradually and imperceptibly. No, you have jumped up all of a sudden, as if out of the ground, with all your presumptions and perhaps quite as arrogant as you are now. You have quoted and praised scarcely any one but yourself. But how have you condemned and made war upon others? In violation of all literary usage and public law, you have offered no peace and compromise; you have immediately refuted your opponents, and have not allowed them to be in the right unless they really were so; you have not mentioned with one syllable all their other talents and their profundity, and have had no other end in view than to annihilate. You are capable of denying the most well known truth which has been received as valid ever since the beginning of the world, and turning it into dust under the hands of some poor opponent, so that an honest man knows no longer from what premises he is to dispute with you. Hence many have resolved and pub-

licly protested, that they will not learn anything from you, as you are certainly not worthy to receive learning from; whereas others have even doubted whether your name could be mentioned in honorable company.*

A. Well, we must bear the affliction that these people will not learn anything.

But to return. Do you hold that every person is possessed of that fundamental contemplation which we have described above?

R. According to your description, necessarily, as sure as he has ever in all his lifetime uttered one solitary universal proposition, as such; and not merely repeated it, but repeated it with firm conviction; or as sure as he has absolutely required some one else to think something precisely as he thinks it; for we have seen that this necessity and universality proceeds from and bases itself solely upon that contemplation.

A. But does every one rise also to the clear consciousness of that contemplation?

R. This, at least, does not follow, like the contemplation itself, from the fact of an absolute assertion; for such an assertion is uttered as absolutely grounded in itself, without further asking for its higher ground, and without consciousness of such higher ground. It seems that in order to rise to this consciousness, it is first necessary to reflect upon that absolute asserting and account for it to one's self. But this does not seem to be by any means so universally and necessarily grounded in the nature of rational beings, as that absolute asserting, without which, indeed, all communication and common understanding amongst mankind would almost cease.

Nevertheless every one certainly can make that reflection—as we, for instance, did in our previous conversation,—and can thus rise to a consciousness of that contemplation.

A. Undoubtedly every one can do it; precisely as every one can through freedom elevate himself to pure morality, or by means of another contemplation, closely

*The reviewer of the Erlanger Literary Journal doubts whether my name may be mentioned in honorable company.

related to the philosophical scientific contemplation,—to poetry. Concerning this matter our opinion is as follows, and it will suffice to tell you this historically: It is not proper to deny to any one the faculty of rising to a consciousness of scientific contemplation, as it is not proper to deny to any one the faculty of being morally regenerated, or of being a poet. But just as little can it be explained—precisely because these faculties and abilities are absolutely primary and are not conditioned by any previous grounds—why they should appear in this person and not in that one. Experience, however—which, as we have said, cannot be explained from grounds—teaches us, that some men do not rise to it, no matter what you may do to assist them. In youth, when man is most open to culture, he rises easiest to science or to poetry. But if he has allowed this youth to pass away, and has ruined half a lifetime by committing to memory, studying a little of everything and reviewing,—it is pretty safe, with little risk of being refuted by success, to deny to such a one a faculty for science or for poetry, although you certainly cannot demonstrate that he has not got that faculty.

At any rate, no one should get angry if this faculty of rising to a contemplation of contemplation is denied to him; as no one gets angry if poetical talents are denied to him.

In regard to the latter, people have long since comforted themselves by the proverb, that “Poets are born and not made;” why, then, do they not extend this consolatory proverb to philosophy? Unfortunately, it has become a habit to consider philosophy as a matter of ordinary judgment, and hence, to consider the denial of philosophical talent equivalent to a denial of ordinary judgment. This certainly would be an insult, but coming from the lips of the Science of Knowledge, that denial has indeed, quite another meaning.

But it is not enough to possess that faculty in general; *one must also have the talent of strictly controlling it; of being able to exercise it at any moment when it may be needed, and hence, of entering at will that altogether peculiar world which it*

opens to us, and of dwelling with full consciousness in that world, wherever one may be. It is not unusual, especially amongst young people, that a light penetrates them all at once and scatters the old darkness like a flash of lightning; but, before they are aware of it, the eye has closed again, and the old night set in; whereupon they await the moment of a new enlightenment. This condition is worth nothing for a permanent and systematic study. Contemplation must become perfectly free and must be completely in our power. But this power over it we attain only through continual practice.

But systematic thinking requires, even as such, freedom of the mind to give direction to its thinking, with absolute arbitrariness, to fix it upon this or that object, and keep it so fixed until it has been sufficiently digested for our purpose, and to keep everything else removed from it. This freedom is not inborn in men, but must be acquired through diligence and through constant exercise of our mind, which is naturally much inclined to wander from one object to another. Now, transcendental thinking is distinguished, moreover, from ordinary thinking in this: that whereas ordinary thinking is fixed, and, as it were, carried by something, which is separated and determined already in itself, transcendental thinking, on the contrary, has nothing for its object but itself, and hence, is fixed, separated, divided and determined only through itself. The mathematician has, at least, his lines and figures on the black-board, and thus concentrates his attention; but the teacher of the Science of Knowledge has nothing whatsoever except himself and his free reflection. Now, this reflection he is to keep constantly fixed throughout a long series, and at each new link he must have all the previous links in their fixed determination before his mind, while, at the same time, he must also keep the whole series of links not completely determined, since each successive link will again further determine all the previous ones. It is clear, that he must not only have the ordinary faculty of concentrated attentiveness and self-activity of the mind, but also an habitual ability of reviewing his

whole mind, fixing it, analyzing it in the finest or coarsest manner, recomposing it, and again analyzing it, and always with a firm unshaken hand, and with the assurance that it will always remain as he has arranged it. It is, therefore, also clear, that this is not only a higher degree of labor, but an entirely new *kind* of mental labor, the like of which has never before been known, and that the faculty of working in this manner can be practised and exercised only upon the one object, which exists for it. Hence, all other thinkers, however accomplished and practised, will need time and diligence to gain a firm foothold in this science, and can by no means give a competent judgment upon it after the first or second reading. Is it then, to be supposed, that unpractised and unscientific persons, who have no other culture than that of memory, and who are not even capable of carrying on an objective-scientific argument, should be able to pass a judgment upon any detached proposition of that science, which they may have found in some newspaper or another, at the very first reading, just as if they had merely to say whether they

had already heard the same thing somewhere else or not?

At the same time, no study is so easy as the study of this science, as soon as but the very first ray of light concerning its true nature has risen upon students. This science presupposes no elementary knowledge of any kind, but merely ordinary mental culture. It does not weaken the mind, but strengthens and enlivens it. Its progress is altogether connected, and its method very simple and easily comprehended. Each single point of this science, which has been understood, throws a flood of light upon all the others.

The Science of Knowledge, therefore, is not inborn in man, as his five senses are, but can be acquired only through study. It was this I wished to convince you of, my reader, so that, if you have not studied it yet, and have no inclination to study it now, you may at least be careful not to make yourself ridiculous by talking about it; and secondly, so that you may know what to think, when other persons, however highly cultivated otherwise, talk about the Science of Knowledge, without having studied it any more than you have.

COUSIN UPON KANT'S DOCTRINE OF THE ABSOLUTE.

[By FRANCIS A. HENRY.]

The ultimate question of all philosophy is the question of the Absolute. Is there an Universal, a Necessary, an Unconditioned on which the Finite and Particular depend? Though doubtless every truth is this or that truth, has it not in it a something which constitutes it truth independently of its particular elements? Is there a substance, so to speak, in which the relative inheres, a foundation on which it rests, and of which all particulars are the partial representation? In analysing the Related do we not come at last to an Unrelated, the ground on which all the former reposes—itself groundless; and will not every process of explanation lead sooner or later to an inexplicable?

All else in philosophy leads up to this culmination which crowns the synthesis of

thought, and according to its holding on this point a philosophic system may be judged. For the fundamental principle of all science is the Platonic axiom:—There can be no science of that which fluctuates or passes away. The Absolute, then, is the true scientific element. The scientific spirit consists in constantly bringing the Absolute into the Relative, and constantly leading up the Relative to the Absolute. Thus all philosophy may be summed up under these three heads:—Rational Psychology, or science of the Absolute as idea, in its relation to reason; Ontology, or science of the Absolute outside of reason, in its relation to existence; and Logic, or the passage from the first to the last, from idea to being.

It is evident to a superficial observation